

Message Text

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62

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE VALLETTA 1088

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, MT

SUBJ: P.M. MINTOFF STATEMENT ON FIRING OF SENIOR MILITARY OFFICER

REF: DAO VALLETTA 271200Z NOV 73

1. IN LENGTHY PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT JUNE 24, MINTOFF CLAIMED HE FIRED LT. COLONEL TRIGONA, SECOND RANKING OFFICER IN ARMED FORCES MALTA (AFM) ON THE ADVICE OF AFM COMMANDER, BIRGADIER SAMMUT TAGLIAFERRO, FOR FAILING TO FOLLOW P.M.'S ORDERS WHILE ACTING COMMANDER DURING S-T'S ABSENCE IN NOVEMBER 1973. (SEE REFTEL) HE ALSO TOOK OCCASION TO ATTACK CATHOLIC CHURCH DAILY-IL HAJJA", FOR CRITICALLY QUESTIONING THE FIRING OF TRIGONA, ITS RECENTLY APPOINTED BOARD, AND BOARD MEMBER, HERBERT GANADO. GANADO WAS HEAD OF THE FORMER PRO-CATHOLIC, PRO-ITALIAN DEMOCRATIC NATIONALIST PARTY WHO WAS EXILED TO UGANDA DURING WORLD WAR II FOR PRO-ITALIAN FASCIST SYMPATHIES.

2. COMMENT: WHILE MINTOFF'S OUTBURST MAY BE YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF HIS HYPERSENSITIVITY TO CRITICISM,
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HAVE SET UP THE TRIGONA CASE SIMPLY TO KNOCK IT DOWN IN AN

ATTEMPT TO PUT AN END TO THE SERIES OF QUESTIONING ARTICLES
ON IT IN THE OPPOSITION AND INDEPENDENT PRESS. HIS SHARP
CRITICISM OF "IL HAJJA" ALSO MAY BE MORE THAN SIMPLY A
REACTION TO THIS NEW, MORE CONSERVATIVE BOARD, AND REFLECT
GOM'S APPARENT DESIRE TO DEAL MORE STRICTLY WITH THE NON MLP/GWU
PRESS. A RECENTLY TABLED PRESS BILL, WHICH WILL PROVIDE GOM
WITH BROADER POWERS TO INHIBIT PRESS CRITICISM HAS BEEN CON-
DEMNED IN WIDELY PUBLICIZED LETTER TO MINTOFF FROM THE PRESS
FREEDOM COMMITTEE OF THE COMMONWEALTH PRESS UNION.GETZ

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